

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
----- 111064

P R 121529Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6700

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 MOSCOW 16313

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJ: PRE-SUCCESSION MANEUVERING IN SOVIET LEADERSHIP?

REF: (A) STATE 261650

1. SUMMARY. IN RESPONSE TO PARA 9 REFTEL AND IN THE SPIRIT OF CONSTRUCTIVE DISCOURSE, WE WISH TO SUGGEST THAT POLICY PROBLEMS RELATED TO SUCCESSION MAY NOT BE SO IMMINENT OR DANGEROUS AS REFTEL IMPLIES. WE ARE KEENLY AWARE AND FULLY AGREE THAT BREZHNEV'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED AND MAY END AT ANY TIME FOR PHYSICAL REASONS, BUT BELIEVE THAT HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE A CLEARER PERSPECTIVE ON THIS PROBLEM THAN WE DO AND CONSEQUENTLY HAVE PROBABLY MADE INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR SENIOR COLLECTIVE

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LEADERSHIP IF IT HAPPENS. SPECIFIC INDICATORS OF

POLICY DISAGREEMENTS AND SUCCESSION MANEUVERING ARE NOT VISIBLE ENOUGH HERE TO SUPPORT THE PREDICTION THAT BREZHNEV WILL BE DISPLACED SOON. IF THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WAS PREPARING FOR SUCCESSION AS EARLY AS LAST SPRING, AS ASSERTED REFTEL, WE FIND IT STRANGE THAT MORE DIRECT EVIDENCE HAS NOT SURFACED IN THE PAST HALF YEAR. ALTHOUGH NOVEMBER 7 DEFINITIONS OF DETENTE DO NOT FORSWEAR SOVIET ZEAL IN PURSUIT OF TRADITIONAL GOALS, WE CONSIDER THE REAFFIRMATION OF A COMMITMENT TO THE DETENTE LINE AS IMPORTANT IN THIS REGARD.

2. ON THE MIDDLE EAST, WE DO NOT SEE HOW THE SOVIETS COULD HAVE PLAYED IT MORE DECISIVELY THAN THEY HAVE SINCE SINAI II, AND BELIEVE THAT THE PATIENT CONSTRUCTION OF A SOVIET-SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN COALITION FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS HAS REQUIRED A HIGH DEGREE OF POLICY CONSISTENCY. WE CONSIDER THE ODDS ARE AGAINST "BREZHNEV SETTING A NEW PRECEDENT IN SOVIET -- AND RUSSIAN -- HISTORY BY STEPPING ASIDE VOLUNTARILY," UNLESS HE IS CONVINCED THAT HE WILL DIE WITHIN THE NEXT HALF YEAR. PRECEDENTS FOR SUCH ACTIONS BY SUPREME RULERS ARE SCARCE NOT ONLY IN RUSSIAN HISTORY, BUT IN WORLD HISTORY AS WELL. ON IDEOLOGY, A REREADING OF THE RECENT RECORD SHOWS A RISING COLUME DEVOTED TO THE CAPITALIST CRISIS AND TASKS OF WESTERN COMMUNISTS, BUT NO SUBSTANTIAL DEVIATION FROM THE INE THAT THE CRISIS IS NOT MORTAL AND THAT WESTERN CPS SHOULD STICK TO REFORMIST AGITATION AND AVOID BEING SWALLOWED IN UNITED FRONTS. WE CONSIDER THE VARIOUS ARTICLES DEVOTED TO IDEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS AND THE VIEWS EXPRESSED AS A NORMAL MANIFESTATION IN A PRE-CONGRESS, PRE-ECPC PERIOD. SOME OF THE ITEMS NOTED REFTEL RESULT FROM A PERCEPTIBLE COOLING TOWARD THE U.S. BY MOSCOW AND WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS PHENOMENON IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE (NOTAL). BUT BY THE SMAE TOKE, IF A SUCCESSION STRUGGLE IS IN FACT UNDERWAY, WE BELIEVE THE U.S. HAS A SOMEWHAT WIDER MARGIN OF INFLUENCE IN DETENTE POLICY THAN REFTEL CONCLUSION SUGGESTS. END SUMMARY.

3. WHILE WE ARE VERY MUCH AWARE THAT WASHINGTON IS PRIVY  
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TO CERTAIN INDICATORS ON THIS SUBJECT THAT WE DO NOT HAVE AT OUR DISPOSAL, OUR PRELIMINARY RESPONSE TO REFTEL IS THAT THE JUDGMENTS OFFERED MAY WELL BE RIGHT, BUT THE REASONS ADDUECED TO SUPPORT THEM IN MOST CASES ARE NOT UNEQUIVOCALLY CONVINCING. WHAT IS BEYOND DISPUTE IS THAT BREZHNEV MAY COLLAPSE PHYSICALLY AT ANY MOMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE IS UNDER CONSTANT MEDICAL ATTENTION AND IT MAY NOT BE BEYOND THE SKILLS OF HIS MONITORS TO

KEEP HIM GOING LONGER THAN THE DEPARTMENT SEEMS TO THINK,  
-PERHAPS EVEN UP TO HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY IN DECEMBER, 1976.  
IN ANY CASE, WE CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT BREZHNEV'S  
COLLAPSE WOULD NOT NECESSARILY PRECIPITATE AN  
IMMEDIATE SUCCESSION CRISIS. GIVEN HIS PHYSICAL  
CONDITION AND HIS LONG ABSENCES IN THE PAST, WE THINK  
HIS SENIOR COLLEAGUES HAVE TAKEN ACCOUNT OF SUCH  
A COLLAPSE IN THEIR CONTINGENCY PLANNING, AND THAT  
THEY WOULD PROBABLY RESPOND WITH A SENIOR COLLECTIVE  
LEADERSHIP CONSISTING OF KIRILENKO, PODGORNYY, KOSYGIN  
AND SUSLOV FOR THE INTERIM. THE SPECIFIC QUESTION IS  
THEREFORE WHETHER BREZHNEV IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING  
EASED OUT OR UPSTAIRS, WITH OR WITHOUT HIS PARTICIPATION,  
AND WHETHER THIS INVOLVES POLICY DISAGREEMENTS,  
PARTICULARLY ON DETENTE AND RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

4. WE ARE FRANKLY SURPRISED BY THE EVIDENT ACCEPTANCE IN  
REFTEL OF THE NOTION THAT HE MAY STEP DOWN EVEN BEFORE  
THE CONGRESS. AGAIN, IN OUR JUDGMENT ONLY A SHARP  
PHYSICAL DETERIORATION WOULD PROVIDE SUFFICIENT  
JUSTIFICATION FOR BREZHNEV TO RENOUNCE POWER BEFORE,  
DURING OR EVEN SHORTLY AFTER THE CONGRESS.  
THE FACT THAT SOVIET DIPLOMATS ABROAD ARE USING THIS  
POSSIBILITY TO ENCOURAGE CONCESSIONS TO CURRENT SOVIET  
NEGOTIATING POSITIONS IS OBVIOUSLY SELF-SERVING AND NOT  
PARTICULARLY SURPRISING. SOME STATEMENTS BY SOVIET  
OFFICIALS, ON THE OTHER HAND, SUCH AS THE ONES MADE BY  
THE SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL IN PARS, DO STRIKE  
US AS VERY SURPRISING -- ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED -- AND  
AS EVIDENCE WORTH CONSIDERING THAT SOMETHING INDEED  
MAY BE GOING ON. BUT AS OPPOSED TO THIS, ALL THE OUTWARD  
EVIDENCE IN MOSCOW ITSELF, INCLUDING CELEBRATIONS OF  
THE 58TH OCTOBER AND WHAT THE SOVIETS ARE TELLING TO  
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JOURNALISTS AND OTHER WESTERN OBSERVERS, WOULD SEEM  
TO INDICATE THAT BREZHNEV STILL MAINTAINS HIS  
UNQUESTIONED PREEMINENCE.

5. WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR INDICATIONS OF POLICY  
DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE TOP LEADERS WHICH SHOULD BE  
AMONG THE FIRST SIGNS OF SERIOUS SPLITS OR A DRIVE TO  
DISPLACE BREZHNEV. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE IMPLICATION  
RECENTLY EXPRESSED BY SHCHERBITSKIY (MOSCOW 14312)  
THAT POOR GRAIN HARVESTS, ESPECIALLY THE 1975 CROP,  
MIGHT SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR CRITICISM OF BREZHNEV'S  
FARM POLICY, WE HAVE SEEN NO SIGNS OF ANYTHING WHICH  
EVEN SMACKS OF POLICY DIFFERENCES -- CERTAINLY NOTHING  
WHICH INDICATES FACTIONAL MANEUVERING. KULAKOV'S  
PROMINENT ABSENCE FROM THE KREMLIN PODIUM NOVEMBER 6

AND ON LENIN'S TOMB NOVEMBER 7MIGHT SUGGEST TO SOME  
THAT AGRICULTURAL PROBLEM MAY CAUSE HEADS TO ROLL.

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ACTION SS-25

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P R 121529Z NOV 75  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6701  
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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HOWEVER, IF A SCAPEGOAT IS TO BE SACRIFICED, WE THINK  
IT WOULD MOST LIKELY BE POLYANSKIY, WHO WAS PRESENT  
AND SMILING ON THE OCCASION. IN ANY CASE, THE TIME  
FOR LINING UP THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS JUST ABOUT  
AT HAND AS THE SOVIETS GO INTO THEIR OBLAST LEVEL  
ELECTIONS. BUT WE HAVE YET TO SEE SIGNIFICANT PATTERNS  
OF CADRE DEMOTION, PROMOTION, OR ASSIGNMENT DEVELOPING.  
ON THE CONTRARY, PRELIMINARY INDICATORS ARE THAT WE  
WILL BE IN FOR LITTLE CHANGE IN THIS REGARD. IN SHORT,  
WHILE WE ASSUME THAT POLICY ARGUMENTS ARE  
CURRENTLY TAKING PLACE -- AS THEY ALWAYS DO -- AT

-POLITBURO LEVEL, WE SEE NO CONVINCING SIGNS THAT SUCH  
DISPUTES ARE KEYED TO FACTIONAL MANEUVERING FOR POWER.  
AT LEAST, WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE  
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COMPOSITION OF ANY SUCH FACTIONS OR THE ISSUES AROUND  
WHICH THEY WOULD BE CLUSTERED. FURTHERMORE, AS SHELEPIN  
PROBABLY HAD CAUSE TO FIND OUT, AS LONG AS THE SENIOR  
LEADERSHIP CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN A SOLID PHALANX, IT  
MIGHT BE NOT ONLY DIFFICULT, BUT DANGEROUS,  
FOR ANY MORE JUNIOR POLITBURO MEMBER TO BECOME TOO ACTIVE  
IN PROMOTING HIS FUTURE PROSPECTS AT THIS JUNCTURE.

6. WHILE DIFFICULTIES WERE CLEARLY ENCOUNTERED DURING  
THE GISCARD VISIT (PARA 3 REFTEL) WE SEE NOTHING TO  
SUGGEST THAT LEADERSHIP POLITICS HERE WAS THE CAUSE.  
CERTAINLY, SOVIET ACCOMMODATION TO THE NEEDS OF THE  
FRENCH CP, AS WELL AS CONFLICTING FRENCH AND SOVIET  
PURPOSES OVER CSCE FOLLOW-UP ARE SUFFICIENT REASON  
TO ACCOUNT FOR THESE PROBLEMS. WE ARE QUITE IN THE  
DARK ABOUT THE "MINOR POLITICAL DIFFICULTY" SUFFERED  
BY BREZHNEV, BUT WOULD WELCOME ELUCIDATION.

7. WE AGREE WITH THE OBSERVATION IN PARA 6 THAT  
CONSIDERABLE ROOM FOR DISAGREEMENT EXISTS WITHIN THE OVERALL  
POLICY CONSENSUS ON DETENTE: IT HAS BEEN CLEAR FOR SEVERAL  
YEARS THAT LEADERS SUCH AS SUSLOV AND PODGORNYY CAST  
A SOMEWHAT MORE SKEPTICAL EYE ON THE BENEFITS OF DETENTE  
THAN DO SOME OTHERS.

8. RE PARA 4 REFTEL, WE DO NOT REGARD "ERRATIC POLICY  
SIGNALS" ON THE MIDDLE EAST AS INDICATIVE OF "HIGH-LEVEL  
BACKBITING AND DISAGREEMENT," PRESUMABLY AT POLITBURO LEVEL.  
WE SEE NO SIGN, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT GROMYKO, THE MAJOR LEADER-  
SHIP ARCHITECT OF MIDDLE EAST POLICY, IS IN TROUBLE. AS  
WE HAVE NOTED ELSEWHERE, THE SOVIETS ARE IN A BIND ON THE  
MIDDLE EAST AND ARE ANNOYED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN PLACED IN  
A DISADVANTAGEOUS POSITION BY U.S. DIPLOMACY. WE AGREE  
THAT THERE HAS PROBABLY BEEN A "CONTINUED LACK OF  
DIRECTION" IN SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY, BUT THINK THIS  
MORE LIKELY TO BE BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE ANY VERY  
ATTRACTIVE OPTIONS, RATHER THAN THE RESULT OF "MANEUVERING  
WITHIN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP." IN ANY CASE, DOBRYNIN'S  
NOVEMBER 9 DEMAR MAY WELL INDICATE THAT POSSIBLE INTERNAL  
POLICY DISPUTES REGARDING MIDDLE EAST HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.

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9. EGYPTIANS HERE IN FACT TELL US THEY HAVE SEEN EVIDENCE OF DIFFERENT APPROACHES IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE APPARATUS, WITH SOME ANGRY ENOUGH TO WASH THEIR HANDS OF EGYPT AND OTHERS IN FAVOR OF PLAYING IT COOL. AT POLICY LEVELS, HOWEVER, THE COOL HANDS AND HEADS APPEAR TO BE DOMINANT. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT IN THE TWO MONTHS SINCE SINAI II THE SOVIETS HAVE MOVED TO CONSTRUCT A CREDIBLE COALITION FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS, HOPING TO COMBINE WITH THE EQUALLY UNHAPPY AND ISOLATED SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS. AND THEY ARE CURRENTLY AT WORK ON THE IRAQIS, IF ONLY TO BOLSTER THEIR POSITION WITH SYRIA. NO UNIFIED POSITION HAS BEEN WORKED OUT, BUT NO SUBSTANTIVE OPTION THAT WE CAN SEE HAS YET BEEN FORECLOSED, AND THE TREND HAS BEEN AWAY FROM, RATHER THAN TOWARD, "ENMESHMENT WITH EXTREMISTS." WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING THAT WOULD LEAD US TO DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SUPPORTING MIDDLE EAST EXREMISTS, BUT ON THE LIMITED EVIDENCE AT OUT DISPOSAL THEY SEEM TO BE FURTHER FROM IT NOW THAN IN THE COLD MORNING AFTER SINAI II. WE FRANKLY DO NOT SEE HOW THEY COULD HAVE DONE MUCH BETTER, GIVEN THE CARDS THEY HAD TO PLAY, AND THEY HAVE DONE IT BY WATCHMAKER'S WORK WHICH NORMALLY REQUIRES A RATHER HIGH DEGREE OF POLICY CONSISTENCY AND COORDINATION. IN SHORT, WE SEE NO SIGNS OF CHASMS IN THE POLICY APPARATUS POINTING TO HIGH-LEVEL STRUGGLE OVER THIS VITAL POLICY AREA.

10. ON IDEOLOGY (PARA 4), WE HAVE REREAD THE RECORD OF "PRONOUNCEMENTS" ON THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM AND THE TASKS OF WESTERN COMMUNISTS SINCE AUGUST: TIMOFEYEV, ZARODOV, ARBATOV, GROMYKO, PLETNEV, KIRILLOV, CHEREPENIN, TRUKAN, GILILOV, AND NOW PONOMAREV'S DEPUTY ZAGLADIN IN THE OCTOBER PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY, AS WELL AS THE NOV 7 MATERIAL CURRENTLY AT HAND (SEPTEL). ZARODOV, KIRILLOV AND TRUKAN (IN THE OCTOBER KOMMUNIST) STRESS PROLETARIAN AND COMMUNIST HEGEMONY, AND POINT IMPLICITLY TO THE DANGER THAT WESTERN CP'S WILL BE SWALLOWED IN THE APPROVED UNITED FRONTS. CHEREPENIN AND GILILOV (ALSO IN THE OCTOBER KOMMUNIST) ADDRESS THE VARIED FORMS OF STRUGGLE FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SOCIAL REFORM, INCLUDING STRIKES. TIMOFEYEV (IN AUGUST INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS) AND PLETNEV (IN PRAVDA OCT 10) DEAL WITH THE "DEEPENING" CAPITALIST CRISIS, AND DEFEND THE SOVIET LINE ON WESTERN CP TASKS AGAINST MAOISTS  
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AND TROTSKYITES ON THE "LEFT" AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ON THE "RIGHT." ZAGLADIN, THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE, DIRECTLY ATTACKS THE QUESTION OF WHY REVOLUTION HAS NOT TAKEN PLACE IN THE CAPITALIST COUNTRIES WHERE CONDITIONS ARE THEORETICALLY RIFE; HIS ANSWER IS THAT THESE ARE PRECISELY THE CAPITALIST

COUNTRIES WHERE IT IS MOST DIFFICULT, SINCE THE LARGER WORKING CLASSES ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO BOURGEOIS INFLUENCE AND "SPLITTISM." THESE VARIATIONS ARE INTERESTING, BUT OVERALL WE SEE NO SUBSTANTIAL DEVIATION, FROM TIMOFEYEV TO ZAGLADIN, IN THE LINE THAT THE CAPITALIST CRISIS IS SERIOUS BUT NOT MORTAL, AND THAT WESTERN COMMUNISTS SHOULD BE PUTTING THEIR CURRENT STRESS ON THE PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF REFORMIST AGITATION BUT SHOULD, AT THE SAME TIME, KEEP LONG-TERM GOALS IN MIND AND TAKE CARE NOT TO DISAPPEAR IN UNITED FRONTS DOMINATED BY SOCIAL DEMOCRATS.

11. THE STEPPED-UP OUTPUT ON IDEOLOGY IS NORMAL IN A PRE-CONGRESS PERIOD, AND, BEGINNING WITH ZARODOV, THE MOTIVATION SEEMS TO US DEFENSIVE RATHER THAN OFFENSIVE. THE MESSAGE MAY WELL SERVE AS BOTH A WARNING TO THE PCI AND A SOP TO THE PCF, BUT AS WE READ IT, THE SOVIETS ARE CALLING FOR

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6702

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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DISCIPLINE, NOT MILITANCY. NONE OF THIS REALLY CONTRADICTS--  
TIVEN WHAT MARIO SOARES HAS BEEN SAYING AND DOING IN THE  
REAL WORLD--"THE SOVIET LINE ON THE PORTUGUESE SOCIALISTS."  
NOR DOES IT GO AGAINST, AS WE HAVE EXPLAINED ELSEWHERE,  
THEIR EMERGING POSITION ON THE ECPS. MOST IMPORTANT IN OUR  
PRESENT CONTEXT, NONE OF ITS SUGGESTS A DEBATE OR MANEUVERING  
AT THE POLITBURO LEVEL ON THESE QUESTIONS. IF, FOR EXAMPLE,  
WE ASSUME THAT BREZHNEV, SUSLOV AND PONOMAREV SUPORT THE  
ZARODOV THESIS--AS SEEMS REASONBLE--WHO ON THE POLITBURO DO  
WE ASSUME TO BE AGAINST IT?

12. PARA 7 REFTTEL ALSO RAISES THE MORE GENERAL QUESTION OF  
SOVIETMILITANCY IN SUPPORTOF CLIENTS AND INTERESTS  
ABROAD. WE BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN, AND WILL  
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CONTINUE TO BE, GOVERNED IN EACH CASE BY THE POSSIBILITIES  
FOR PRACTICAL SUCCESS RATHER THAN BY ABSTRACT THEORY, AND  
THAT THE ATTRACTIONS OF "A MORE ACTIVE POLICY IN SELECTED  
THIRD WORLD AREAS" WILL DEPEND, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ON  
WESTERN, PARTICULARLY U.S., REACTION TO SUCH A POLICY. THE  
IDEA THAT A WEAK, DRIFTING, TRANSITIONAL SOVIET LEADERSHIP  
MAY BE ENMESHED BY EXTREMISTS IN OVEREXTENDED AND DANGEROUS  
POSITIONS SEEMS TO US UNLIKELY. IF ANYTHING, PAST PRACTICE  
WOULD INDICATE THAT A NEW AND UNTESTED SOVIET LEADERSHIP  
WOULD MOVE TO CONSOLIDATE ITS DOMESTIC BASE FIRST AND BE  
VERY CAUTIOUS IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THIS WAS CERTAINLY THE  
CASE WITH THE BREZHNEV-KOSYGIN LEADERSHIP IN THE AFTERMATH  
OF 1964 AND THE KHRUSCHEV-MALENKOV LEADERSHIP IN  
THE AFTERMATH OF 1953.

13. FUTHERMORE, THERE SEEMS TO US TO BE AN ORGANIC LIMITATION  
TO THE PROSPECT THAT CONTENDERS FOR POER WILL ADOPT A POSE  
OF MILITANT ORTHODOZY IN AN ATTEMPT TO OUTDO THEIR  
RIVALS. UNTIL POWER IS GRASPED, MILITANCY CANNOT BE  
TRANSLATED INTO POLICY. ONCE POWER IS GRASPED, THE FAMILIAR  
STATE REASONS FOR MODERATION REASSERT THEMSELVES FOR THE  
NEW INCUMBENT(S). SPEAKING GENERALLY, EXTREME ORTHODOX  
MILITANCY SHOULD PROBABLY BE SEEN AS AN "ELECTORAL PLANK,"  
RATHER THAN AN EARNEST OF HARD FUTURE POLICY. SPEAKING  
SPECIFICALLY, WE SEE NO OUTWARD INDICATION--ALTHOUGH IT  
CANNOT BE RULED OUT--THAT HARD-LINERS ARE CURRENTLY BATTLING  
FOR POWER WITH BREZHNEVITES AND COMPLETELY AGREE WITH REFTTEL  
THAT BREZHNEV'S HEIRS WILL STICK TO THE BASIC OUTLINES OF  
HIS DETENTE POLICY.

14. RE THE THESIS OF PARA 8 REFTTEL, WE THINK THAT THE



SOVIETS ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE AMERICAN ABILITY TO REARRANGE THE CARROTS AND STICKS AT A TIME WHEN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION IS DISTINCTLY COOLING TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION AND WHEN THIS OPINION IS EXPRESSED THROUGH AN INCREASINGLY RAMBUNCTIOUS CONGRESS (SEPTTEL). ARBATOV, FOR EXAMPLE, MADE THIS CONCERN ABUNDANTLY CLEAR IN HIS SEPTEMBER IZVESTIYA ARTICLE AND INDIRECTLY CALLED FOR ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS TO COUNTER THIS DEVELOPMENT IN U.S. PUBLIC OPINION. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW IS REAL. THE SOVIETS SPEND MUCH TIME AND EFFORT TALKING TOWARD  
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WASHINGTON, NOT JUST TO ASCERTAIN WASHINGTON'S THOUGHTS BUT TO TRY AND INFORM THE AMERICANS HOW THE SOVIETS WILL RESPOND IN GIVEN CONTINGENCIES. WHILE WE WOULD NOT WISH TO OVERSTRESS THE MARGIN OF OUR INFLUENCE, WE BELIEVE IT IS SOMEWHAT WIDER THAN PARA 8 SUGGESTS.

15. WE EMPHASIZE THAT WE ARE NOT COMMITTED TO ANY GIVEN LINE OF INTERPRETATION AND THAT WE ARE THEREFORE NOT REJECTING DEPARTMENT'S ANALYSIS, BUT ONLY RETURNING SCOTCH VERDICT OF "NOT PROVEN." WE THEREFORE INTEND TO KEEP EYES OPEN FOR ANY OF FOLLOWING KEY INDICATORS OF POLITICAL MOVEMENT. AS SEQUENCE OF ELECTIONS RISES UP PARTY PYRAMID, WE WILL LOOK FOR PATTERNS SHOWING SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF IDENTIFIABLE FACTIONS. WE ANTICIPATE THAT MANY KEY CHANGES WILL BE MADE AT PLENUMS PRECEDING PARTY CONGRESS AND WILL TRY TO REPORT AND ANALYZE THESE SHIFTS. ANY LINKAGE WITH POLITBURO MEMBERS COULD, OF COURSE, BE SIGNIFICANT. WE ANTICIPATE SOME REPLACEMENTS OF AGING MINISTERS AS WELL AS IMPORTANT PARTY FIGURES. TRANSFERS OF POLITBURO OR SECRETARIAT MEMBERS WOULD BE MAJOR NEWS, OF COURSE, AND WE DO EXPECT SOME PROMOTIONS. BUT RETIREMENT OR TRANSFERS OF SOME MEMBERS, FOR INSTANCE, ARVID PEL'SHE AT AGE 76, WOULD SEEM OF MUCH LESS IMPORTANCE. THE EXPECTED DECEMBER 1 PLENUM SHOULD GIVE IMPORTANT INDICATORS ON THE POLITICAL TIMETABLE, ESPECIALLY IN REGARD TO THE AGENDA AND SEPAKERS OF THE PARTY CONGRESS. FAILURE TO ANNOUNCE THESE ITEMS WE WOULD SEE AS EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN ANNOUNCEMENT OF BREZHNEV AS THE RAPPORTEUR, SINCE IT MIGHT SUGGEST UNCERTAINTY IN THE KREMLIN OVER BREZHNEV'S IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

16. IN SUM, BREZHNEV IS A SICK MAN AND A PRE-SUCCESSION STRUGGLE MAY THEREFORE BE GOING ON IN MOSCOW. ACCUMULATION OF BREZHNEV HEALTH PROBLEMS AND POLICY TENSIONS IN KEY AREAS SUCH AS THOSE SUGGESTED IN REFTTEL PROVIDE AT LEAST ONE POSSIBLE UNDERPINNING FOR SUCH A STRUGGLE. BUT WE ARE NOT YET PERSUADED BY THE EVIDENCE THAT SUCH

A CUMULATION EXISTS OR THAT MANEUVERING BETWEEN TWO OR  
MORE GROUPS WITH OPPOSED POLICY VIEWS IS ACTUALLY GOING  
ON AT THE PRESENT MOMENT.

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## Message Attributes

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**Original Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
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**Subject:** PRE-SUCCESSION MANEUVERING IN SOVIET LEADERSHIP?  
**TAGS:** PFOR, UR, US  
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